

1674--A CONFERENCE THAT MADE HISTORY--1934

Three Score Years & Ten Since Notable Conference In Confederation Chamber

70th Anniversary of Historic Charlottetown Conference Recalls Gathering Here of the Confederation Fathers and the Conception of a Union of all the Provinces Into the Dominion of Canada.

The following authoritative account of the historic Charlottetown Conference of September 1, 1864, which led up to the Confederation of the Dominion of Canada, is from "The Union of the British Provinces" by the late Hon. Edward Whelan, himself a leading delegate at the conference, and one of Prince Edward Island's most distinguished sons. It was compiled in the winter of 1864-5 and published in the following May, during the heat of the Confederation controversy:

Colonial Secretary and His Excellency the Governor-General, and the other North American Provinces in order to ascertain the policy of Her Majesty's Government and the opinions of the other Colonies, with a view to an enlightened consideration of a question involving the highest interests, and upon which the public mind in all the provinces ought to be set at rest.

"Which resolution being seconded and put was agreed to by the house."

Favorably Received

This resolution, having been forwarded to the Colonial Office, was transmitted by the Duke of Newcastle in a despatch of the 6th July, 1862, to the Governor-General, and to the lieutenant-governors of the several provinces; and in a separate despatch to the Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, His Grace expressed his unqualified approval of the matter referred to in the resolution above quoted, whether the union referred to should include amalgamation with Canada, or merely a Union of the Lower Provinces. Referring to both topics: "I am far from considering," said His Grace, "that they do not form a very proper subject for calm deliberation." Then cautiously saying that Her Majesty's Government was not prepared to announce any definite course of policy, on a question which seemed to originate with only one province, the noble Duke expressed his own opinion on the question in the following words:

"If a union either partial or complete, should hereafter be proposed with the concurrence of all the Provinces to be united, I am sure that the measure would be weighed in this country by the public, by Parliament, and by Her Majesty's Government, with no other feeling than an anxiety to discern and to promote any course which might be the means of promoting the prosperity, the strength, and the harmony of all the British communities in North America."

P. E. Island Sentiment

Thus prompted to consider the question of union, the Lieut.-Governors of the Maritime provinces brought it under the notice of their respective legislatures at the commencement of their sessions of 1864, with the view to the appointment of delegates to confer upon the practicability of establishing a legitimate union between the Maritime Provinces. The question was discussed in the several legislatures, with calmness and ability, by the leading men of the contending parties, and without reference to local party issues. The discussion elicited however—and more particularly in the Prince Edward Island legislature—a strong feeling of dissatisfaction at the proposal for a legislative union; but still the legislature of the Island felt that they could not honorably keep aloof from the proposed conference; and on the 13th of April, passed, but without a division, the following resolution, which is identical with the resolutions, aiming at the same object, passed in the legislatures of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick:

"Resolved, That His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, be authorized to appoint delegates (not to exceed five) to confer with delegates who may be appointed by the Governments of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, for the purpose of discussing the expediency of a Union of the three Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, under one government and legislature. The report of the said delegates to be laid before the Legislature of this Colony, before any further action shall be taken in regard to the proposed question."

Delegates Appointed

In conformity with the resolutions referred to, delegates were appointed by the Governments of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Canada was

at this time, without previous concert with the Maritime Provinces, engaged in considering the necessity of a change in its constitution, so as to reconcile, if possible the conflicting interests of the eastern and western divisions of the province; and it was deemed an appropriate time to bring the question of colonial union generally, which would embrace Canada, under the notice of the proposed conference. With this view the Canadian government solicited permission to be present by delegation at the conference. Their request was most cordially complied with; and on the 1st September, all the delegates met, according to previous arrangement, at Charlottetown.

THE DELEGATES

- Nova Scotia was represented by: The Hon. Charles Tupper, M.P.P., Provincial Secretary.
- The Hon. Wm. A. Henry, M.P.P., Attorney-General.
- The Hon. Robert Barry Dickie, M.L.C.
- The Hon. Jonathan McCully, M.L.C.
- The Hon. Adams G. Archibald, M.P.P.
- New Brunswick was represented by: The Hon. S. L. Tilley, M.P.P., Provincial Secretary.
- The Hon. John M. Johnston, M.P., Attorney-General.
- The Hon. John Hamilton Gray, M.P.P.
- The Hon. Edward B. Chandler, M.L.C.
- The Hon. W. H. Steeves, M.L.C.
- Prince Edward Island was represented by: The Hon. Col. Gray, M.P.P., President of the Executive Council.
- The Hon. Edward Palmer, M.L.C., Attorney-General.
- The Hon. W. H. Pope, M.P.P., Colonial Secretary.
- The Hon. George Coles, M.P.P.
- The Hon. A. A. Macdonald, M.L.C., Newfoundland sent no delegates to this conference.
- Canada was represented by: The Hon. John A. Macdonald, M.P.P., Attorney-General, Upper Canada.
- The Hon. George Brown, M.P.P., President of Executive Council.
- The Hon. Alexander T. Gait, M.P.P., Minister of Finance.
- The Hon. George E. Cartier, M.P.P., Attorney-General, Lower Canada.
- The Hon. Hector L. Langevin, M.P.P., Solicitor-General, Lower Canada.
- The Hon. William McDougall, Provincial Secretary.
- The Hon. Thomas D'Arcy McGee, M.P.P., Minister of Agriculture.

The Canadian ministers—not having been designated to consider the question of legislative union, to which the attention of the other delegates was specially directed by a resolution of their respective assemblies—were informally present at the conference.

Confederation Idea Cradled

Although no report of the Charlottetown Conference has yet been given to the public, it is well understood that the proposal to unite the Maritime Provinces under one government and one legislature was deemed impracticable; but the union of the delegates was unanimous: that union upon a larger basis might be effected; and with the view of considering the feasibility of such a union in all its details, it was proposed by the Canadian ministers to hold a further conference at Quebec, with the consent of the governments of the Lower Provinces, and at such time as might be named by His Excellency the Governor-General. This arrangement was agreed to, and the conference at Charlottetown suspended its deliberations.

BANQUET IN CHARLOTTETOWN

Before leaving Charlottetown a committee composed of members of the executive council of Prince Edward Island, and some of the most prominent citizens of the capital had made arrangements for entertaining at a ball and banquet, the distinguished delegates from the other provinces, together with the lady friends and others who had accompanied them. The entertainment was given in the Provincial Building at Charlottetown on the evening of the 8th September. The members of both branches of the legislature, as well as the principal office-holders in the colony, were invited as the guests of the committee, and no expense or trouble was spared to make the entertainment worthy of the occasion, credit being given to the committee for the generous spirit which prompted and characterized the festivity. At the banquet several of the delegates gave utterance to their sentiments on the great question of union—all declining to utter a word in expressing their appreciation of the generous spirit which prompted and characterized the festivity. The speeches were not reported as fully as could be desired, owing to the inexperience of the reporter; but they were considered accurate insofar as they conveyed the spirit of the remarks of the different speakers.

The main object of this unprecedented compilation is to preserve the sentiments of the delegates and other prominent public men, uttered on public occasions, while the former were engaged in the duties of their mission in the Lower Provinces and in Canada; and Charlottetown being the first place where an occasion of this kind presented itself, such a report of the speeches there delivered as can now be obtained, should, of course, appear first. After the usual toasts were honored in the customary way, the health of the Governor-General and that of the Governors of the Maritime Provinces, were mentioned in the complimentary style which time-honored usage has prescribed.

LIEUT.-GOVERNOR DUNDAS

George Dundas, Esquire, lieutenant-governor of Prince Edward Island, returned thanks for the toast, on behalf of His Excellency, the Governor-General, and likewise on his own behalf and that of his brother governors in the other provinces. He expressed great satisfaction at the auspicious meeting of so many distinguished gentlemen from the neighboring provinces, whose convention would, he trusted, be conducive to the interests of Her Majesty's subjects on this side of the Atlantic—enabling them to form, as it were, a more extensive acquaintance with our people and their resources than could be acquired in our present isolated condition, and thus greatly enlarge the commercial and social intercourse between the several Provinces.

COLONEL GRAY

Colonel Gray, the leader of the Government of Prince Edward Island, who was chairman on this occasion, said in proposing the above toast, he had no doubt but that he was giving utterance to the sentiments of all the people of this colony, in expressing pleasure and entire gratification at this visit to our island home of some of the ablest statesmen of Canada and the adjoining provinces. He would not, he said, attempt to make a speech, as he was proud to know that those who had assembled to welcome their distinguished visitors would now be addressed by some of the representatives of two of the greatest nations of the world, whom he had the honor and extreme pleasure of seeing around him. One remark, however, he would make, and it was that he sincerely and confidently believed that this would be productive of much good, and would serve as the happy harbinger of such a union of sentiment and interest among the three and a half millions of people who were happily British America, who neither time nor change could forever destroy.

SIR JOHN'S SPEECH

The Hon. John A. Macdonald, attorney-general for Upper Canada, on rising to respond to the toast, was loudly applauded. He said the people of these Lower Provinces and of Canada were separated too long. Our hearts were one; our loyalty and attachment to the throne of England were the same; we were one ancestry;—except a portion of the Canada;—and yet, we were unfortunately severed from each other by the present construction of our respective constitutions and governments. He had, however, every reason to believe that the result of the convention that had held its sittings in Charlottetown for the past week, would lead to the formation and establishment of such a federation of all the British North American provinces as would tend very materially to enhance their individual and collective prosperity, politically, commercially and socially; and also give them, in their united manhood, that national prowess and strength which would make them at least the fourth nation on the face of the globe. He alluded to the uninterrupted pleasure and happiness which he, in common with all the delegates, felt at their visit to this lovely island. He said he appreciated the

hospitality and kindness which they all received at the hands of their co-delegates and others in this place; and he felt assured that this very favorable impressions made on the hearts and minds of all the Canadian gentlemen, whether married or unmarried, would lead to others and, if possible, more happy visits to this charming place.

HON. GEORGE ETIENNE CARTIER

The Hon. George Etienne Cartier, attorney-general for Lower Canada, rose also to return thanks for the toast and was loudly cheered. He felt, reluctance, he said, in following his able colleague, the learned Attorney-General for Upper Canada, and after some playful badinage on the remarks of the latter in reference to the ladies, he said it was a gratifying fact for the British American provinces that they could claim, as their ancestry, two of the greatest nations of the world. He, in common with his countrymen in Canada East, claimed to be the descendants of the inhabitants of old France; he said we are Frenchmen as to race, but Frenchmen of the old regime. He spoke of a recent visit to France; said that when present at a meeting of the French Academy of Paris, a few years ago, he was asked how had the French in Lower Canada managed to maintain their nationality? His reply was, that it was because they separated from France before the French Revolution. Had it not been for that fact their nationality would have been lost in the convulsions which followed that period of their country's history. They owed the preservation of their nationality to the free institutions which they had received from England. It was a happy day, in his opinion, when England and France fought side by side as brothers in the Crimean War. That was the first time since the 12th century that they did battle together in one common cause; and he was proud to say that the French-Canadians today rejoice as much at the prosperity of England as at that of France. As to the question of the color of the delegates, he said though the convention held its meetings with closed doors, and he was not at liberty to state all that transpired, yet this much he would say, that he hoped and believed the result of their deliberations would end in a great confederation of the British provinces, such as must prove beneficial to all, and an injury to none. They (the delegates) met to inquire whether it were possible for the provinces, from their present fragmentary and isolated materials, to form a nation or kingdom; Canada, he said, was a large country, with a vast and extensive interior, could not make a nation; neither could the Maritime Provinces of themselves become a kingdom. It was, therefore, essentially necessary that these national fragments and resources of all the provinces should be concentrated and combined, in order that they, in their trade, intelligence, and national power and prosperity, might be rated as at least the fourth nation of the world. He concluded his address by complimenting the ladies, and referred to Francis the First, King of France, who was a chivalrous and brave king—for said he, chivalry and bravery always accompany each other—who had said that festivities like those we had now the honor and pleasure to enjoy, without the labor of the plow, and without the spring, and spring without flowers. This, remarked the honorable and learned gentleman, cannot be said of the present assembly, for charming flowers were in their blooming beauty all around us; and he was proud to wish that the flowers of Canada had the advantage of a contrast. After repeating his thanks for the honor conveyed by the toast, the learned gentleman resumed his seat, amid great cheering.

Hon. Dr. Tupper

The Hon. Dr. Tupper, provincial secretary of Nova Scotia, said he felt that he would not do justice to the people of P. E. Island did he not render, on his own behalf as well as for all the delegates present, his sincere and heartfelt thanks to the government of this colony and all classes of the community, for the generous hospitality and goodwill manifested by them toward their brethren from the other provinces who were now assembled at Charlottetown. The momentous character of which he would not then attempt to describe. The deliberations of the convention, he said, were conducted apart from the public, not because there was any desire to conceal its proceedings, but in order that the confidential character of the delegation might lead to speedier results. He felt assured that all would endorse the sentiment that it was our duty and interest to cement the colonies together as for all the delegates to their greatness. A union of the North American Provinces would elevate their position, consolidate their influence, and advance their interest; and at the same time continue their fealty to their Mother Country and their Queen, which fealty is the glory of us all. The British American statesman who does not feel it his duty to do all in his power to unite, politically, socially, and commercially, the British provinces, is unworthy of his position, and is unequal to the task committed to him. We know full well that the strong arm of England is ever ready to be outstretched in our defence, should the Colonies ever have the misfortune to require its powerful aid in defensive operations. He was fully convinced that the great question of colonial union did not depend on the fluctuations incident to political parties. He believed this question would be safe if the

political wheel in any of the Colonies were to be turned to-morrow. There were those in the ranks of the Opposition in all the Colonies, who, he had no doubt, would lend their abilities to the advocacy of every measure calculated to unite the energies or elevate the status of the British North American Provinces. If we would preserve the constitution under which we have the happiness to live, and that British connection so highly appreciated by us all, we should lend our aid for the consummation of that important event—the union of the provinces.

Hon. A. G. Archibald

The Hon. Adams G. Archibald, leader of Her Majesty's Opposition in Nova Scotia, followed Dr. Tupper, and said he would assure all, that in regard to this question they in Nova Scotia had no government—no opposition; they were all one on this important subject. They want, as the Hon. Mr. Cartier very properly observed, to bind the colonies together, and make of them one nation. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick feel that by joining together they can become what in their present separated condition they can never be. Who but will admit that the man who five years ago would predict the present condition of the American States, would be called a false prophet—hence the necessity of their joining together. It would be the proudest day in the history of British America, when they would unite hand in hand and form a nation, which in all the elements that constitute greatness, might be ranked as the third or fourth on the face of the globe. Well, then, said he, may we be proud of the inauguration of a movement, which at no very distant day, will be looked upon as one of the greatest and most important events of the present age. He then alluded to the harmony and good-will which prevailed during all the deliberations of the convention—in proof of which he alluded to the fact that the conference was about to adjourn to Halifax, lest Nova Scotia and New Brunswick should, without further notice, become annexed to P. E. Island.

Hon. J. M. Johnson

The Hon. John M. Johnson, attorney-general of New Brunswick, returned thanks on behalf of that province, which he was appointed to represent in the conference chamber. He said he would like to make the union one of the heart as well as of the understanding. We have the happiness to belong to a country second to none for the beneficence of her ruler, the bravery of her sons, and the extent of her power—a country which differs materially from that across the border. The constitution under which we have the honor and happiness to be governed keeps constantly expanding with the wants of the people; its elastic qualities can be adapted to the growing requirements of its people. Hence the superiority over that of the States of America. The defects of their constitution have led to the present lamentable state of civil war into which they have been plunged. Well may we boast of the glorious constitution of old England. He concluded his remarks by expressing his gratification at the progress which has marked this colony since his last visit some twenty years ago. It has been said, that when you see one scene of the Island you see all, such being the sameness of its scenery, and its characteristic slowness. This, from his own personal knowledge, he could contradict; for that which twenty years ago might be considered as barely attractive was now extremely captivating—that which was then undeveloped and unimproved, has grown in beautiful proportions, rendering Prince Ed-

Confederation Fathers

(1) Col. the Hon. JOHN HAMILTON GRAY, President Executive Council, P.E.I.

(2) Hon. GEORGE COLES, M.P.P., P.E.I.

(3) Hon. EDWARD PALMER, Attorney General, P.E.I.

(4) Hon. A. A. MACDONALD, M.L.C., P.E.I.

(5) Hon. T. FRATH HAVILAND, M.P.P., P.E.I.

(6) Hon. EDWARD WHELAN, M.P.P., P.E.I.

(7) Hon. WILLIAM H. POPE, Colonial Secretary, P.E.I.

ward Island a place of no mean importance in British America, and one also which would be very materially benefited in all its relations by its union with the other Provinces.

The Hon. Col. John Hamilton Gray, M.P.P., for St. John, New Brunswick, and one also of the New Brunswick delegates, then rose and expressed in chaste and eloquent terms his high appreciation of the hospitality of the people of Prince Edward Island, which he said, "would not be readily effaced from the memories of the delegates." Alluding to the influence of union on the affairs of Prince Edward Island, Mr. Gray observed that one of the leading features of a colonial union would be an adjustment of the Land Question, which had retarded the progress of this Island. He was confident that whatever the nature of the union might be, the difficulties under which the people of this Island had labored relative to that long vexed question, would be forever settled. When, said the learned gentleman, the people of all British North America, shall, with our voice, proclaim the colonies united

(Continued on Page 10)

Where Confederation Was Born

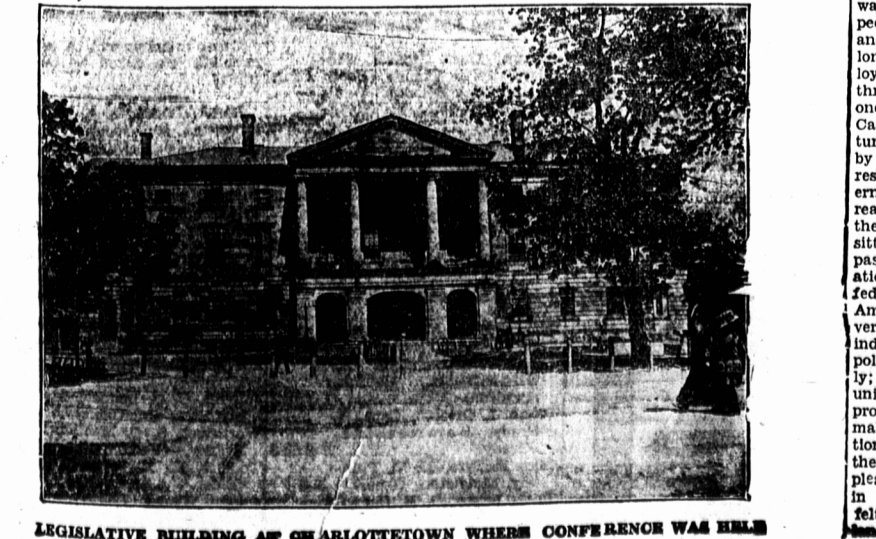
Rooms in Legislative Building at Charlottetown, P.E.I., where the first Conference was held. Left, Tablet commemorative of the event.

INSCRIPTION

"Unity is Strength. In the hearts and minds of the delegates who assembled in this room on September 1st, 1864, was born the Dominion of Canada."

"Precedence being their guide they builded better than they knew."

"This tablet is erected on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the event."



LEGISLATIVE BUILDING AT CHARLOTTETOWN WHERE CONFERENCE WAS HELD

were seven all Three asses. n starters. The fastest by Minnie 7 Morgan, er mother re Thompson's son by the late etown got nd entries ey, Whit-id Cyclone 34 horse- Sim a St- in three 2.38%. rdo a son' s straight- able time inal heat. nite Grey id 2.40 class best time Again the y won a hird heat mare en- ed a mile ck record s named 2nd, 1890, r classes, took five r, Black- it, owned rished in s placed count of y getting won the final re Whit- and event -year-old y namely y by All- ideo, Mil- 250 lbs. by Black n Swift, sd above. 1st class ith three y Harry leon and sh Mes- each time he other- iving the y Ram- Lamber, nd Con- Golden 32 1/2 the nd meet. he third, of third 267 every e made endure- 10 olden ction cts that to offer er over ed con- rimental e years- gure a fair average ritable average will be e book ed and selects d hog.